

THE AGREEMENT OF SALVATION BY GRACE WITH WALKING IN GOOD WORKS NO. 2210

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 28, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them”
Ephesians 2:9, 10.*

I SHALL call your attention to the near neighborhood of these two phrases, “Not of works,” and “Created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” The text reads with a singular sound, for it seems strange to the ear that good works should be negated as the cause of salvation, and then should be spoken of as the great end of it. You may put it down among what the Puritans called, “Orthodox Paradoxes,” if you please, though it is hardly so difficult a matter as to deserve the name.

Not long ago, I tried to handle the point of difference supposed to exist between the doctrine of faith—“Believe, and you shall be saved,” and the doctrine of the new birth and its necessity—“You must be born again.” My method was on this wise; I did not explain the difficulties which appear to the logician and the doctor of metaphysics, but I tried to show that, practically, there were none. If we deal only with difficulties which block up the way to salvation, there are none. As for those matters which involve no real hindrance, I leave them where they are. A rock which is in nobody's way may stand where it is. He that believes in Jesus is born again. These two things are equally true; there must be a work of the Spirit within, yet he that believes in the Lord Jesus has everlasting life.

Now, there is a contention always going on about the doctrine of good works, and instead of taking one side or the other, we shall try to see whether there is really anything to quarrel over if we keep to the Scriptures. We insist upon it, with all our might, that salvation is “not of works, lest any man should boast.” But, on the other hand, we freely admit, and earnestly teach, that “without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” Where there are no good works, there is no indwelling of the Spirit of God. The faith which does not produce good works is not saving faith; it is not the faith of God's elect; it is not faith at all in the Scriptural sense. I have just taken these two points, to bring them forward for the help and comfort of beginners. I seek not to instruct you who are already well taught already; but my aim at this time is to instruct beginners on this important subject. Salvation is not of works, but, at the same time, we, who are the subjects of divine grace, are “created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” This is plain to the enlightened believer, but babes in grace have weak eyes, and cannot at once perceive.

Before, in the gracious providence of God, Luther was raised up to preach the doctrine of justification by faith, the common notion among religious persons was that men must be saved by works, and the result was that, knowing nothing of the root from which virtue springs, very few persons had any good works at all. Religion so declined that it became a mere matter of empty ceremony, or of useless seclusion, and, in addition, superstition overlaid the original truth of the gospel, so that one could hardly find it out at all. The reign of self-justification and priestcraft led to no good result upon the masses of religious people. Indulgences and forgiveness of sins were hawked through the streets, and publicly sold. So much was charged for the pardon of one sin, and so much for another, and the treasury of “his holiness” at Rome—who might better have been called “his unholiness”—was filled by payments for abating penalties in a purgatory of Rome's inventing. Luther learned from the sacred Volume, by the Spirit of the Lord, that we are saved by grace alone through faith, and, having found it out, he was so possessed by

that one truth that he preached it with a voice of thunder. His witness on one point was so concentrated that it would be too much to expect equal clearness upon all other truths. I sometimes compare him to a bull that shuts his eyes, and goes straight on at one object which he means to overthrow. With a mighty crash, he broke down the gates of Papal superstition. He saw nothing—he did not want to see anything—except this, “By grace are you saved through faith.” He made very clear and good work upon that point, faulty as he was upon certain others. The echoes of his manly voice rang down the centuries. I note that nearly all the sermons of Protestant divines, for long after Luther, were upon justification by faith, and, whatever the text might be, they somehow or other brought in that article of a standing or falling church. They seldom finished a sermon without declaring that salvation is not by works, but that it is by faith in Jesus Christ. I do not censure them for a moment; far rather do I commend them—better too much than too little upon the central doctrine of the gospel. The times needed that point to be made clear to all comers, and the Reforming preachers made it clear.

Justification by faith was the nail that had to be driven home, and clinched, and all their hammers went at that nail. They were not nearly so specific and clear upon many other doctrines as they were upon this, but then it was a foundation stone, and they were occupied in laying it, and they did lay it, and laid it thoroughly, and laid it forever. Still, they would have more fully completed the circle of revealed truth if sanctification had been as fully apprehended and as clearly explained as justification. It had been as well if the legs of the gospel of the Reformation had been equal, for one was a little longer and a little stronger than the other, and therefore there was a limp—a halting like that of victorious Israel, as he came from Jabbok—but still a limp, which it would be well to cure. We have passed beyond the stage of dwelling too much on that cardinal doctrine, and I greatly fear that in these times we do not have enough preaching of justification by faith. I could wish the Lutheran times back again, and that the old thunders of Wittenberg could be heard once more, and yet I shall be glad if everything that is practical in the gospel shall also have its full sphere allotted to it. Imputed righteousness, by all means; but let us hear of imparted righteousness also; for both are precious gifts of grace. The duties—let me rather say, the high and holy privileges—which come to us as children and servants of God—these should be maintained and fully preached, side by side with the blessed truth embodied in those lines—

*“There is life in a look at the Crucified One:
There is life at this moment for you.”*

I shall dwell, first of all, upon the first point of the text, which is this, “Not of works,” or *the way of salvation*. “Not of works” is a negative description, but within the negative there lies very clearly the positive. The way of salvation is by something other than our own works. Secondly, I shall speak about *the walk of salvation*. We who are saved walk in holiness, for we are “created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.” It is a decree of the sovereign Lord that His chosen should be led to walk in holiness.

I. First, then, THE WAY OF SALVATION is negatively described as “Not of works.” To this many take exception, but that we cannot help; the Scripture is plain enough. We are told that we ought not on any occasion, allow persons to sing—

*“Sinner, nothing do,
Either great or small,
Jesus did it, did it all,
Long, long ago.”*

Great exception has been taken to that expression, but I believe that, if the same truth had been expressed in any other words, the same objection would have been raised, for it is the truth that is objected to, rather than the words in which it is set forth. My text itself would be, to such persons, very objectionable—“Not of works.” They are ready to rail at Paul for speaking thus evangelically. They hate the doctrine of salvation all of gift, and not in the least of merit—a doctrine which we love. We preach salvation “not of works”; we repeat the teaching again and again, and mean to repeat it continually, till we die. Salvation is of the Lord’s mercy, and not by works of the law.

If we were to preach that salvation is of works, we should please many fine folk; but as we do not know that it would be at all to their benefit that they should be pleased, we shall not brush one hair of

our head in a different way from that in which it grows, to please them; much less shall we keep back, or explain away, the fundamental truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and that for several reasons.

If we were to preach to sinners, dead in trespasses and sins, that salvation would be by their own works, *we should be setting aside the way of salvation by grace*. There cannot be two ways of salvation for the same people. If we take to the one, we practically deny the other. It cannot be questioned that a guilty man, if saved at all, must be saved through the mercy of God. It cannot be denied, also, that our Savior and His apostles taught that we are saved by faith. A man must shut his eyes if he does not see this to be their teaching. If then I teach men that they can be saved by works, I have practically told them that salvation by grace is a myth, a mistake, a mischievous error. I have set it aside, for, as I have said before, there cannot be two ways to heaven; there cannot be more than one. If I set up the way of works, I shut up the way of grace. If salvation is of merit, it is not of mercy. But if there is no salvation of men by the pure mercy of God, what an unhappy case are we in! To deny grace is really to deny hope. Where, then, would there be any gospel, or glad tidings, or *good news*? The way of salvation by works is not "*news*." It is the old way of man's devising, which is the general and well-known error of all the ages. Moreover, it is not, "*good news*," or glad news; for there is nothing good or glad in it. That we shall be rewarded for our works, is nothing more than the heathens taught. Justification by religious performances, and meritorious deeds, is nothing better than the old Phariseism with a Christian name stuck upon it. It is not worth revealing by the Spirit of God, for it is to be seen by the light of man's own candle. That doctrine makes the Lord Jesus Christ to be practically a nobody; for if salvation is of works, then the way of salvation through faith in our Savior is superfluous and even mischievous.

Next, to preach *the way of salvation by works is to propose to men a way in which they have already failed*. If you are to be saved by works, you must begin very early; you must begin before you sin, since one sin decides the matter. But already you have commenced to break the law of God. I am not addressing persons who have yet to start upon the way, for they have started already. You are a good way on the road, one way or other, and since you began in the way of works, what a failure you have made of it already! Is there anyone here who can claim that he is already saved by works, as far as he has gone? Has anyone among you been without sin? Look at your lives, examine your consciences; observe your words, your thoughts, your imaginations, your motives, for all these come into the account. Is there a man or woman here that does good, and sins not? Scripture declares that "there is none that does good, no, not one." "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, everyone, to his own way." The way of salvation cannot, therefore, be by following a road from which we have already so sinfully and steadily departed. If you were perfect as Adam was before he sinned, you might follow the way of works, and be safe; but you are not in that condition. If I could be sent to an Adam and an Eve altogether unfallen, I might propose to them the way of salvation by obedience to the law, but you have fallen, and your nature is inclined to forsake the right way. The very garments that you wear show that you have discovered your shame. The daily labors which weary you prove that you are not in paradise. The very preaching of the gospel implies that you are in a sinful world. You are not possessed of a will unbiased, or inclined to that which is good; you have chosen the evil, and still continue to choose it; and therefore I should only be proposing to you a road in which you have already stumbled, and I should be setting you a task in which you have already broken down.

And, next, I think it will be admitted by all, that *the way of salvation by good works would be self-evidently unsuitable to a considerable number*. I will take a case. I am sent for on an emergency, and it is the dead of night. A man is dying, smitten suddenly by the death-blast. I go to his bedside, as requested. Consciousness remains, but he is evidently in mortal agony. He has lived an ungodly life, and he is about to die. I am asked by his wife and friends to speak to him a word that may bless him. Shall I tell him that he can only be saved by good works? Where is the time for works? Where is the possibility of them? While I am speaking, his life is struggling to escape him. He looks at me in the agony of his soul, and he stammers out, "What must I do to be saved?" Shall I read to him the moral law? Shall I expound to him the Ten Commandments, and tell him that he must keep all these? He would shake his head, and say, "I have broken them all; I am condemned by them all." If salvation is of works, what more have I to say? I am of no use here. What can I say? The man is utterly lost. There is no remedy for him. How can

I tell him the cruel dogma of “modern thought” that his own personal character is everything? How can I tell him that there is no value in belief, no help for the soul in looking to another—even to Jesus, the Substitute? There is no whisper of hope for a dying man in the hard and stony doctrine of salvation by works.

If salvation had been by works, our Lord could not have said to the thief dying at His side, “Today shall you be with Me in paradise.” That man could do no works. His hands and feet were fastened to the cross, and he was in the agonies of death. No, it must be of grace, all-conquering grace, and the *modus operandi* must be by faith, or else for dying men the gospel is a mockery. The man must look, and live. The expiring sinner must trust the expiring Savior. As life ebbs out, the penitent must find life in Jesus’ death. Is it not clear that the gospel of works is unsuitable in such a case as that? Now, a gospel which is unsuitable to anybody is not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, I put it plainly. A gospel that does not suit everybody does not suit anybody, and if it suits any class and condition really and truly, it must suit all classes. I think I have told you that, on one occasion, I had a letter which was intended to be very irritating to me, from some rather eminent, aristocratic gentleman, who said that he had read some of my sermons when he was out on the coast of Africa, and he found that certain black fellows out there—certain “niggers”—delighted in them very much. He wrote to inform me that I was a very competent preacher for “niggers.” I accepted the assurance at once as a very high compliment. I felt that, if I could preach to “niggers,” I could preach to anybody, and that, if the gospel that I preached was suitable to the natives on the coast of Africa, it would certainly suit the people in London; if those who are afar off could understand it, you, who are near, could also understand it. The gospel was not sent into the world to be a patent medicine that could only be purchased by the wealthy, or a spell that could only be uttered by Latin scholars. It is a Gospel for all ranks and conditions of men, and if I prove that what you call the gospel is unsuitable for the dying, or is unsuitable for the ignorant, it is not the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel of salvation by grace, through faith, is suitable for every class of persons that we have to deal with. Sinful habit has bound in iron fetters many of our fellow citizens, and the gospel can free them. Be the habit drunkenness, or profanity, or what it may, the habit holds them fast, and the prophet says, concerning habit, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may you also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.”

To what purpose, then, do I cry to the leopard, “Change your spots,” or to the Ethiopian, “Change your skin”? I must bring a superior force to bear upon the leopard or the Ethiopian, before this can be accomplished, and there is no force in mere exhortation. You may exhort a blind man to see as long as you like, but he will not see. You may exhort a dead man to live as long as you like, but he will not live through your exhortation alone. Something more is needed. The forces of natural depravity, and the acquired habits of sin in many cases—I think you will grant it—put the doctrine of salvation by works out of court, and if out of court as to one, it is gone as to all, for there can be but one gospel. Go through your convict settlements; go through your jails, and just see what you can do with a doctrine of salvation by good works. You will come home disappointed, however earnest may be your address. But go there, and tell of free grace and dying love, and pardon bought with blood, and eyes that stream with tears, confessions of sin, and cries for pardon, will tell you that you have not spoken in vain.

Further, dear friends, if we go and preach to men salvation by works, we are preaching to them *a way of salvation impossible to all because of the perfection of the law*. What are the good works that can merit heaven? What are the good works that can ensure eternal life? These are not the easy things which some seem to imagine. They must be perfectly pure, continuous, and unspotted. “The law of the Lord is perfect.” It condemns a thought, and even the glance of an eye, as an act of criminality. “Whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart.” The law of God in ten commands means much more than the bare words would imply; it deals with the whole range of moral condition, motive, and thought. Dream not that its sweep includes only external acts; it does include externals, but, in very deed, the ten commands are spiritual, they go right through the heart, and search the inward parts of the spirit. The more a man understands the law, the more he feels condemned by it, and the less does he indulge the dream that he, as he is, shall ever be able to keep it intact. With such foul hands as ours, how can we do clean work? With hearts so polluted, how can we be “undefiled

in the way”? Nature rises no higher than its source, and that which comes out of the heart will be no better than the heart and that is “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.”

The law of God is one, and if you break it in any one point, you break it altogether. If, in a chain of one hundred links, ninety-nine should be perfect, yet if a single link, anywhere in the chain, should be too weak for the weight placed upon it, the load will fall to the ground quite as surely as if twenty links were snapped. One breakage of the perfect law of God involves transgression against the whole of it. In order to be saved by works, there must be absolutely perfect, continuously perfect obedience to it, in thought, and word, and deed, and that obedience must be rendered cheerfully, and from the heart, for this is the pith of the first table—“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.” Can you keep that? Vain-glorious man, have you measured your moral strength against requirements so great, and yet so just? Have you hitherto proved yourself equal to the task? Here is the pith of the second table—“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Have you ever tried to do that—to love your neighbor *as yourself*? You have been a little kind, and sometimes generous, but the standard of loving your neighbor *as yourself*—have you ever reached to that? Has your charity been equal to your self-love? I do not believe that it has ever gone even half the way. Now, “What things soever the law says, it says to them who are under the law,” and if it says all this to you, and you cannot answer to its demands, how can you hope that you shall live by it? When a man fails to keep the law, it condemns him, and its penalty—in other words, its curse—falls on him as justly his due. He that is under the law is under the curse. All that the law has to say to you is—“You have broken me, and you must die for it.” Read the curses written in the Book of Deuteronomy, and remember that all these are pronounced over your head—

*“Look to the flames that Moses saw,
And shrink, and tremble, and despair.”*

And again, dear friends, *if we preach salvation by works, we shall take the minds of men away from a sense of their great need.* Here is a person who has a terrible disease. He can be cured. The knife must be used, but if, instead thereof, I lay down for him rules of cleanliness, and of general hygiene, I may do him some sort of good, but meanwhile he will neglect the chief evil, his disease will spread, and will become fatal. What am I to do, if I am a surgeon? Must I not impress him, first, with the conviction that a serious operation is required, and that it must be submitted to? All the rest will be proper enough, and even necessary, in due time, but I must do nothing to take his mind away from the great master evil that is destroying his life. The sinner must be told that he must be born again, that his nature is corrupt, that this corrupt nature must be destroyed, that a new nature must be created in him; to this his mind must be turned. He must be made “a new creature” in Christ Jesus, and if I stir him up to eternal action, with a view to his salvation by it, I shall be taking his thoughts away from the inward evil of sin, which is the very essence of the matter. O sirs, if you had committed an offense against the government of your country, and were found guilty, and condemned to die, my first business with you would be to entreat you to ask pardon of your queen. I might come into your cell, and say that I would have you dressed more respectably; would have you read such a book, or learn such a science, and this might be all very well, but the first thing you need is to have the sentence of death repealed. I will exhort you, my dear hearers, to do everything that is honest, and right, and good, but there is something needed even more than this. You need to be cleansed from sin by the precious blood of Christ. You need to be renewed in heart by the Holy Spirit, and you must turn your thoughts to these things. You first and most of all need the Lord Jesus. Look to him, I pray you. I dare not exhort you to do this work, or to do that, lest I distract your mind from Christ.

The preaching of legal justification has no power over men. Congregations thus instructed are usually careless, worldly, and devoted to carnal amusements. Those who hear about works feel as if they had now done enough, and do not need to practice them. There is nothing in such doctrine to awaken anxiety, or move desire, or stir the depths of the soul. It has nothing divine about it, nothing supernatural, nothing which can really raise the fallen, cheer the faint, or inspire the gracious. Without unction, life, or fire, a legal ministry is mere fiddling a tune to lame men, or setting forth a course of living action for a vault full of corpses. This point we know to be fact, and therefore we shall not repeat the experiment.

I am afraid that, *if we began to preach salvation by works, we would encourage pride in some, and create despair in others.* Many would think that they had done pretty well, as compared with other people; they would, therefore, right speedily wrap themselves up in a false hope. But others, knowing that they had not done well, as compared with other people, would think that there was no hope for them, and so would sit down in despair. What practical purpose could this serve—to be making some more proud, and others more wicked, through the influence of despair upon them?

But the very worst matter is that *it would be taking them away from Jesus.* Our business, my brethren, is to hold up Jesus Christ. To what end did He die, if men could be saved by their own works? It was a superfluity that He should hang upon the cross if our own merits can open a way of salvation. How could the great God permit and even ordain such a death if we could be saved by our own merits? Why that bloody sweat? Why that nailing of the hands and feet? Why that, “Eli, Eli, lama Sabachthani?” if of yourselves you can be saved? But it is not so. You cannot save yourselves by efforts of your own, and therefore we have to come to you, shutting you up to this one thing only—that you must be saved by faith in Him whom God has set forth to be a propitiation for sin. You need the love of God; you need the power of the Holy Spirit; you need to be quickened into newness of life; you need to be helped to run in the ways of righteousness; in a word, you need everything until you come to Christ, and everything that you want you will find in Him, and in Him alone. Within yourselves there is nothing that you want. You may search, and look, and turn the dunghill of your nature over and over again, but you will never find the jewel of salvation there. That pearl of great price is in the Lord who assumed human nature, and lived, and loved, and died, and rose again, that He might redeem men from the fall, and all the sin consequent thereon. Oh, that you would look away from self once and for all! God forbid that the preacher should ever hold up anything else before you except the crucified Savior, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, bidding men look and live.

To talk to unbelieving men about the possibility of salvation by their own works *would keep them from eternal life.* All that the life of nature can do will never suffice to produce a higher nature. Let the natural exert itself as it may, it will never rise to the spiritual. The best working horse does not thereby become a man; the best-living unregenerate man cannot thereby become regenerate. There must be a new birth, and that comes by faith, and not by works. To believe in Jesus is the entrance gate of the new life, and there is no other door. If we, in any way, set you hunting about for another way, we shall cause you to miss the one only entrance, and that will be to your soul’s eternal loss. As we dread this, we more and more resolve to hold up the cross and the cross alone and again and again we cry, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” God forbid that by our essays upon virtue, or “the enthusiasm of humanity,” we should distract you from hastening to the Lord Jesus, that He may give you rest, life, and holiness! We want you to let your thoughts run, all of them, to Calvary, and to that wondrous Person, whose wounds upon the tree bleed healing for the wounds of sin, and whose death is for believers the death of the great evil power which once held them in bondage.

Thus much upon a topic which we shall never wear threadbare, and which we shall always continue to insist upon while life or breath remains, because it will always be needed while sinners remain on earth needing salvation.

II. But now we come to this second most important part of the subject, namely, THE WALK OF SALVATION. Those who have believed in Christ, and have been the subjects of the Spirit’s work, are now “created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained *that they should walk in them.*” God desires that His people should abound in good works. It is His great objective to produce a people fit to commune with Himself; a holy people, with whom He can have fellowship in time and in eternity. He wishes us not only to produce good works, but to abound in them, and to abound in the highest order of them. He would have us become imitators of Himself as dear children, possessing the same moral attributes as the Father in heaven possesses. Is it not written, “Be you perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect”? Oh, that we came within measurable distance of this blissful consummation!

Note in the text, first, that *there is a new creation.* One of the poets said of old that “an honest man is the noblest work of God.” That is not true, unless we put upon to the word “honest” an emphatic spiritu-

al sense. A Christian man, however, is the noblest work of God. He is the product of the second creation. At first man fell, and marred his Creator's work, but, in the new creation, He that makes all things makes us new. Now, the objective of the new creation of our race is holiness unto the glory of God. You are not new-made in the image of the fallen Adam, but in the likeness of the second Adam. You are not new-created to sin—this cannot be imagined. The new creature sins not, for it is born of God. The new life is a living and incorruptible seed, which lives and abides forever. The old nature sins, and always will sin, but the new life is of God, and it strives daily against the sin of the old nature, and perseveres, and pushes forward towards everything that is holy, upright, and perfect. Its instincts all run towards perfect holiness. The old nature does not care to pray, but the new nature prays as readily as we breathe. The old nature murmurs, but the new nature sings and praises God from an impulse within. The old nature goes after the flesh, for it is fleshly, but the new nature seeks the things of the Spirit, for it is spiritual. If you have been born again at all, you have been born unto holiness. If you have been new-created, you have been created unto good works. If this is not so with us our religion is a mere pretence.

This new creation is in connection with Christ, for we read in the text, “Created in Christ Jesus.” We are the branches; He is the Vine out of which we grow. Your life and all your fruit-producing power lie in your union to Christ. You are not merely new-created, but you are created in Christ Jesus. It is not merely a change from a lower nature to a higher, but from separation from Christ to union with Him. What a wonderful thing that is—that you and I should not only be creatures in the world, but new creatures in Christ Jesus! Creatures we were in the first Adam, but our new creatureship is in the second Adam. Beloved, if you are what you profess to be, you are one with Jesus by that vital union which cannot be dissolved, and good works follow upon that union. Joined to Jesus by faith in Him, love to Him, and imitation of Him, you walk in good works. Your creation to holiness is your creation in Christ Jesus. As you become one with the anointed Savior, His anointing ordains you to service, and His salvation leads you into obedience. There cannot but be fruit on that branch which is vitally joined to that fruitful stem, Christ Jesus, who did always those things which pleased the Father.

Our good works must flow from our union with Christ by virtue of our faith in Him. We depend upon Him to make us holy. We depend upon Him to keep us holy. We overcome sin by the blood of the Lamb. We reach after holiness by the constraining love of Jesus. Love to Christ is the impelling cause of putting away, first one evil, and then another, and the energy enabling us to follow after one virtue, and then another. Love to Christ burns like a fire in the breast that has conceived it, and, as it burns, it makes the heart to glow, and to become transformed to its own nature. You have seen a piece of iron put into the fire, all black or rusty, and in the fire it has gradually become red with heat, and, as it has reddened, it has thrown off the scales of rust, until at last it has looked to be itself a mass of fire. The effect of the love of God, shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit, is to burn off the rust and scales of sin and depravity, and we become pure love to God through the force of the love of God, which takes possession of our being.

Moreover, that love moves us to patient imitation of Christ. Do you know what that means? “The Imitation of Christ” is a wonderful book upon the subject, which every Christian should read. It has its faults, but its excellences are many. May we not only read the book, but write it out anew in our own life and character by seeking in everything to be like Jesus! It is a good thing to put up in your house the question, “What would Jesus do?” It answers nine out of ten of the difficulties of moral casuistry. When you do not know what to do, and the law does not seem very explicit upon it, put it so—“What would Jesus do?” Here, then, stands the case; by your creation in Christ you come to exhibit faith in Him, love to Him, and imitation of Him, and all these are the means by which good works are produced in you. You are “created in Christ Jesus unto good works.”

Notice, that *creation unto these good works is the subject of a divine decree*, “Which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.” This is God's decree. Am I ordained to eternal life? Answer the other question, “Am I ordained to walk in good works?” If I am ordained to good works, then I do walk in them, and the decree of God is manifestly carried out in me. But if I make a profession of being a Christian, attend a place of worship, and compliment myself upon my safety, while I am living in sin, then evidently there is no decree that I shall walk in good works, for I am living otherwise than that de-

cree would have caused me to live. O beloved, it is the eternal purpose of God to make His people holy! Agree with that purpose, with the freedom of your renewed will, and with the delight of your regenerated heart! Concur in the will of God. Yes, vehemently desire, heartily pant after, perfect holiness in the fear of God. Then may you, in the midst of severe struggles against temptation from without and from within, fall back upon the decree of predestination. Since it is God's decree, that, as being new-created in Christ, I should be full of good works, I shall be so despite my old nature, and despite my spiritual weakness. The decree, in the new creature of God, will be carried out despite my surroundings, despite the temptations of my circumstances, despite the opposition of the devil. God has before ordained that we should walk in good works, and walk in them we shall, sustained by His Holy Spirit.

So, then, dear friends, these good works must be in the Christian. They are not the root, but the fruit of his salvation. They are not the way of the believer's salvation; they are his walk in the way of salvation. Where there is healthy life in a tree, the tree will bear fruit according to its kind; so, if God has made our nature good, the fruit will be good. But if the fruit is evil, it is because the tree is what it always was—an evil tree. The desire of men created anew in Christ is to be rid of every sin. We do sin, but we do not love sin. Sin gets power over us sometimes to our sorrow, but it is a kind of death to us to feel that we have gone into sin; yet it shall not have dominion over us, for we are not under the law, but under grace, and therefore we shall conquer it, and get the victory.

The outcome of our union with Christ must be holiness. “What concord has Christ with Belial?” What union can He have with men that love sin? How can they that are of the world, who love the world, be said to be members of the Head who is in heaven, in the perfection of His glory? Brothers, we must, in the power of the text, and especially in the power of our union to Christ, seek to make daily advances in good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them, for walking means not only *persevering* but *advancing*. We should go from strength to strength in holiness; we should do more, and do better. What are you doing for Jesus? Do twice as much. If you are spreading abroad the knowledge of His name, work with both hands. If you are living uprightly, seek to put away any relics of sin that abide in your character, that you may glorify the name of God to the utmost.

And, lastly, *this should be our daily exercise*—“That we should walk in them.” Good works are not to be an amusement, but a vocation. We are not to indulge in them occasionally; they are to be the tenor and bent of our lives. “Oh,” says one, “that is a hard saying.” Do you say so? Well, then, this displays, and sets in clear light, the first part of my subject. You see how impossible it is that you should be saved by these good works, do you not? But if you are saved—if you have obtained a present salvation, if you are now a child of God, if you are now assured of your safety, I charge you, by the love you bear to God, by the gratitude you have to His Christ, give yourself wholly to everything that is right, and good, and pure, and just. Help everything that has to do with temperance, and righteousness, and truth, and godliness, and “let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

May the Spirit of God seal this sermon upon the hearts of His people, for Christ's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—EPHESIANS 2.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN-BOOK”—238, 554, 537.

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